

Message Text

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45

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O R 141519Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7235

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGARDE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 2100

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJ: BREZHNEV REAPPEARS FOR WILSON VISIT

1. BREZHNEV'S REAPPEARANCE AFTER 50 DAYS ABSENCE WAS TREATED BY SOVIET PRESS AND TV AS COMPLETELY NORMAL EVENT. EVENING NEWS PROGRAM VREMYA FOCUSED ON BREZHNEV AT SHORT RANGE IN COVERAGE OF OPENING OF BRITISH-SOVIET TALKS IN KREMLIN. BREZHNEV SEEMED IN GOOD FORM AND SPRITS ON TV, BUT FREQUENTLY OPENED AND CLOSED HIS MOUTH AS IF UNCOMFORTABLE. HE SMOKED OSTENTATIUSLY. RED STAR RAN LARGEST (RETOUCHED) PHOTOGRAPH OF LEADERS WHICH FEATURED BREZHNEV. SOVETSKAYA ROSSIYA RAN SOME PHOTOS IN SMALLER SIZE. PRAVDA SHOWED SOVIET AND BRITISH LEADERS SEATED AT LARGE CONFERENCE TABLE. OTHER PAPERS RAN SMALLER PHOTO OF SEATED LEADERS. BRITISH JURNALIST WHO SAW BREZHNEV TOGETHER WITH WILSON THIS MORNING CHARACTERIZED

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SOVIET LEADER AS LOOKING "VERY FIT AND THE PICTURE OF

GOOD HEALTH, VERY MUCH IN COMMAND OF THE SITUATION,
AND SEEMINGLY FAR MORE VIGOROUS AND ENERGETIC THAN
EITHER KOSYGIN OR GROMYKO."

2. COMMENT: SOVIET HANDLING OF BREZHNEV'S REAPPEARANCE
WAS PREDICTABLE IN VIEW OF SOVIET PUBLIC POSITION THAT
NOTHING SERIOUS WAS BOTHERING BREZHNEV AND SOVIET
REFUSAL ON PRINCIPLE TO DIGNIFY STORIES OF LEADERSHIP
PROBLEMS WITH PUBLIC RESPONSES. HOWEVER, NATURE OF
BREZHNEV'S ILLNESS OR ILLNESSES STILL NOT KNOWN. IN
THIS CONNECTION, CANADIAN AMBASSADOR FORD SAID LAST NIGHT
THAT HE WAS TOLD TWO WEEKS AGO BY A "TRUSTED SOURCE" THAT
BREZHNEV WOULD REAPPEAR ON TV FEBRUARY 13 FOR WILSON,
BUT THAT HE WOULD NEVER FULLY RECOVER FROM HIS ILLNESS
NOR RESUME A FULL WORK SCHEDULE.
STOESSEL

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NNN

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